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Adoption of the report of the Committee on its forty-third session

Rapporteur: Mr. Jerry **Kramer** (Canada)

Addendum

Programme questions: proposed programme budget for the biennium 2004-2005

(Item 4 (a))

Section 28
Public information

1. At its 20th and 21st meetings on 24 June 2003, the Committee for Programme and Coordination considered section 28, Public information, of the proposed programme budget for the biennium 2004-2005 (A/58/6 (Sect. 28)).

2. The representative of the Secretary-General introduced section 28 and responded to queries raised during the Committee's consideration of the programme.

Discussion

3. The significant accomplishments, both substantive and organizational, were acknowledged. It was observed that presentation of the report was improved. The intention to strengthen performance-based management through an annual programme performance review, the Office of Internal Oversight Services-assisted self-evaluation project over three years and staff training opportunities was welcomed, although the protracted length of the evaluation period was queried.

4. The view was expressed that the Secretary-General would be encouraged to expeditiously implement those elements of reform under his sole authority, in accordance with the relevant General Assembly resolutions and decisions already adopted. Support was expressed for the restructuring of the Department of Public

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Information (DPI) and for the measures for the improvement of the Dag Hammarskjöld Library. It was suggested that the resources for all libraries should be transferred to section 28.

5. Clarification of the meaning of "client departments" was sought. The Committee was informed that the client departments were the operational clients of the Department, and therefore close collaboration within the Secretariat was essential to implement effectively the mandates of the General Assembly.

6. The discontinuation of 26 outputs reported in the annex was welcomed, and further review of the outputs was encouraged. The view was expressed that determination of output discontinuation should be based on the issues of priority and impact, and clarification was requested on the reasons why some outputs were discontinued for "inadequate resources". The Committee was informed that the outputs listed in the annex of the report were indeed identified as having low impacts and low priorities; and that in some cases there was duplication.

7. Diverging interpretations were offered of the meaning of paragraph 15 of resolution 57/300, which addressed the rationalization of the United Nations information centres around regional hubs. The Committee was informed that paragraph 15 of General Assembly resolution 57/300, requesting a progress report on the implementation of the proposal, constituted the authority to proceed. As the Western European hub was focusing on the European Union member countries, a question was raised on how Eastern European members would fit in the model. It was also indicated that consultations on applying the regional approach to information centres in other regions had not yet taken place.

8. It was stated that the concept of regional hubs was a valid one from the viewpoint of improving efficiency. It was also stated that it was important to weigh what would be lost by closing existing information centres against the benefits from the reinforced activities through regional hubs. In that connection, it was further stated that the overall support of a host Government should be reflected in the action plan to implement the proposal of the Secretary-General to rationalize the network of United Nations information centres around regional hubs. It was also suggested that countries without information centres should be consulted to see if they thought they could be better served by the regional approach.

9. The view was expressed that the regionalization of information centres around regional hubs did not represent a consensus of the General Assembly and that the process could jeopardize the accomplishment of the objectives of the Department, particularly in developing countries. In that connection, it was also said that the General Assembly should decide on the issue once the report of the Secretary-General on the implementation of the proposal in Western Europe had been submitted.

10. The Committee took note of the fact that details on the consolidation of the United Nations information centres in Western Europe into a regional hub had not been finalized at the time of the preparation of the proposed programme budget and indicated that the matter should be discussed further at the fifty-eighth session of the General Assembly, after consultation with concerned Member States had taken place.

11. It was indicated that a new *Expected accomplishment* entitled "Successful implementation of the regional hub initiative in all regions" and a new *Indicator of*

achievement, "Number of information centres consolidated into regional hubs", should be added to table 28.10.

12. Some Member States noted that the words "Latin America and the Caribbean" should be added after the words "Middle East" in the last sentence of paragraph 28.33.

13. The view was expressed that information in the local languages had the strongest impact on the local population, and that paragraph 28.30 of section 28 should reflect this important element in accordance with paragraph 37 of General Assembly resolution 57/130 B.

Conclusions and recommendations

14. **The Committee took note of the programme narrative of section 28, Public information, of the proposed programme budget for the biennium 2004-2005 and recommended that the General Assembly further consider section 28, taking into account the following modifications:**

Paragraph 28.3

Replace the first two sentences with the following sentence: "The overarching mandate of the Department of Public Information is in General Assembly resolution 13 (I) of 13 February 1946, and its primary mission is to provide, through its outreach activities, accurate, impartial, comprehensive and timely information to the public on the tasks and responsibilities of the United Nations in order to strengthen international support for the activities of the Organization with the greatest transparency, respecting existing mandates and in line with regulation 5.6 of the Regulations and Rules Governing Programme Planning, the Programme Aspects of the Budget, the Monitoring of Implementation and the Methods of Evaluation, to focus its message and better concentrate its efforts and, as a function of performance management, to match its programmes to the needs of its target audiences, on the basis of improved feedback and evaluation mechanisms as set out in General Assembly resolution 57/130 B".

In the last sentence, after the words "has been formulated", insert the words "as welcomed by the Committee on Information".

Paragraph 28.4

The second sentence should read as follows: "Its core message, with the medium-term plan priorities as the main guide, and taking into consideration General Assembly resolution 55/2 (the Millennium Declaration), will focus on the eradication of poverty, conflict prevention, sustainable development, human rights, the HIV/AIDS epidemic, the battle against international terrorism and the needs of the African continent (see resolution 57/130 B) as well as on international cooperation, the transfer of technology, and transparency in international trade".

Paragraph 28.11

After the words "in Western Europe" in the third sentence, add the words "in accordance with resolution 57/130 B and resolution 57/300, in particular paragraphs 44 and 15 respectively".

Table 28.7

At the end of the sentence in *Objective*, add the words "and assessing that impact through annual programme reviews".

Under *Indicators of achievement* (d), add "(d)" at the beginning of the sentence, and at the end of the sentence add the words "in the implementation of the results of the Department's annual programme impact reviews".

Paragraph 28.29

In the first sentence, delete the words "and established by the Secretary-General".

In the second sentence, replace the words "using the Millennium Declaration as its guide" with the words "of the medium-term plan and of the Millennium Declaration (General Assembly resolution 55/2)".

Paragraph 28.30

Replace the second sentence with "Under the guidance of the Information Centres Service at Headquarters, the United Nations information centres and information components and regional hubs, as applicable, will play a significant role in disseminating information about the work of the Organization to the peoples of the world, including the areas outlined in the United Nations Millennium Declaration, with the information centres as the "field voice" of the Department of Public Information, and will work through local intermediaries to promote public awareness of and mobilize support for the work of the United Nations at the local level, bearing in mind that information in the local languages has the strongest impact on the local populations".

Paragraph 28.31

After the words "regional information hubs in strategic locations" in the first sentence, add the words "in accordance with resolution 57/130 B and resolution 57/300, in particular paragraphs 44 and 15 respectively".

Paragraph 28.33

Delete the last sentence.

Table 28.10

In *Expected accomplishment* (a), replace the words "on priority issues" with the words "in accordance with priorities established by the General Assembly".

In the *Objective*, after the words "on priority issues" add the words "of the medium-term plan and the Millennium Declaration (General Assembly resolution 55/2)".

Paragraph 28.50

At the end of the first sentence, replace the words "the Member States" with the words "intergovernmental organs in collaboration with the Member States".

Table 28.18

The *Expected accomplishment* becomes "(a)"; the *Indicator of achievement* becomes "(a)". Add the following words to *Indicator of achievement* (a): "the number of hits on the United Nations web site, sorted by official languages; and the number of radio programmes broadcast, by language".

Add a new *Expected accomplishment* (b): "Timeliness in submission of photographic and video material".

Add a new *Indicator of achievement* (b): "Period of time within which photographic and video material is available to news organizations and media after an event takes place".

Table 28.22

Under *Indicator of achievement* (a), at the end of the sentence add the words "number of joint and/or coordinated projects by the Dag Hammarskjöld Library and other United Nations libraries; and number of hits on the Dag Hammarskjöld Library web sites, sorted by official language".

Paragraph 28.66

In the first sentence, after "on priority issues", delete the rest of the words and replace them with the following words: "using the priorities of the medium-term plan as main guide and taking into consideration General Assembly resolution 55/2 (the Millennium Declaration)".

Table 28.24

In the *Objective* after the words "using", replace the words "the Millennium Declaration as a guide" with the words "the priorities of the medium-term plan and taking into consideration General Assembly resolution 55/2 (the Millennium Declaration)".

Add the following words to the *Indicators of achievement*: "the number of readers of the *UN Chronicle*, sorted by the official languages; and the number of times articles appearing in the *UN Chronicle* are cited in newspapers and journals".

15. **The Committee observed that the General Assembly, in its resolution 57/300, took note of the proposal of the Secretary-General contained in action 8 of his report (A/57/387 and Corr.1) to rationalize the network of United Nations information centres around regional hubs, where appropriate, in consultation with concerned Member States, starting with the Western European hub.**

16. **The Committee noted the steps taken by the Secretary-General to create a regional hub in Western Europe and recalled that the General Assembly had requested the Secretary-General to present a progress report on its implementation as mandated in paragraph 15 of its resolution 57/300.**

17. **The Committee recommended that the proposal of the Secretary-General to transfer the functions and resources of the Cartographic Section from the Department of Public Information to the Department of Peacekeeping Operations should not negatively affect the services currently provided to users outside the Department of Peacekeeping Operations and recalled that the proposals should be considered in the context of the proposed programme budget for the biennium 2004-2005 in accordance with resolution 57/300.**

18. **The Committee recommended that in this fascicle, section 28, efforts should be made to indicate against each output the origin of the resources proposed, as was done in other fascicles.**